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## **Five infants saved since Safe Place for Newborns law strengthened**

Two years ago, when the Safe Place for Newborns law was strengthened, Minnesota Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson said, “If we can save even one child through this, it will be well worth the effort.” At least five children’s lives have been saved since then.

Enacted in 2000 and amended in 2012, the law allows a mother or someone acting with her permission to safely surrender an unharmed newborn to a designated safe place. Safe places include hospitals, urgent care facilities during regular hours of operation, or an ambulance that is dispatched in response to any 911 call.

In 2012, two children were placed into the foster care system by mothers or their designees who surrendered their children under the law. In 2013, three more children were placed under the guidelines of the law.

“Clearly, Safe Place for Newborns is working. Mothers have made the loving and compassionate decision to place their children with someone who can care for them rather than abandoning them in a time of crisis,” said Jesson.

Infants may be illegally and unsafely abandoned, in part, because mothers do not know that they have a safe and legal option through this law. Cases of abandoned children are rare, but have occurred. Within 24 hours of a mother or her designee leaving a child at a safe place, providers contact social services to place the child in the foster care system temporarily until adopted.

Minnesota’s counties have played a strong role in reviewing and improving the law with the Department of Human Services. Winona County’s Citizen Review Panel — a group of seven to 16 community members who review ways to improve child protection systems in Minnesota — translated information on a [Safe Place for Newborns flyer from English](#) into multiple languages to ensure more members of the public were aware of the law and could easily seek help.

The panel created a public service announcement appearing on local television, radio and in newspapers, and updated the language on flyers for Spanish- and Hmong-speaking communities. Jesson encouraged more communities to do outreach so women have the information they need to keep their children safe.

“Safe Place for Newborns helps both mothers, who are often frightened and distraught because they are unable or unprepared to care for their newborns, as well as the children whose lives have been saved,” Jesson said.

*Editor's note: A [flier with information about the program](#) is on the DHS website.*